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Abraham
Father of Faith

YOUNG READERS SERIES

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"Go out from your country and from your family and from your father's house, into the land to which I will be your guide: And I will make of you a great nation, blessing you and making your name great; and you will be a blessing: To them who are good to you will I give blessing, and on him who does you wrong will I put my curse: and you will become a name of blessing to all the families of the earth."

Abraham

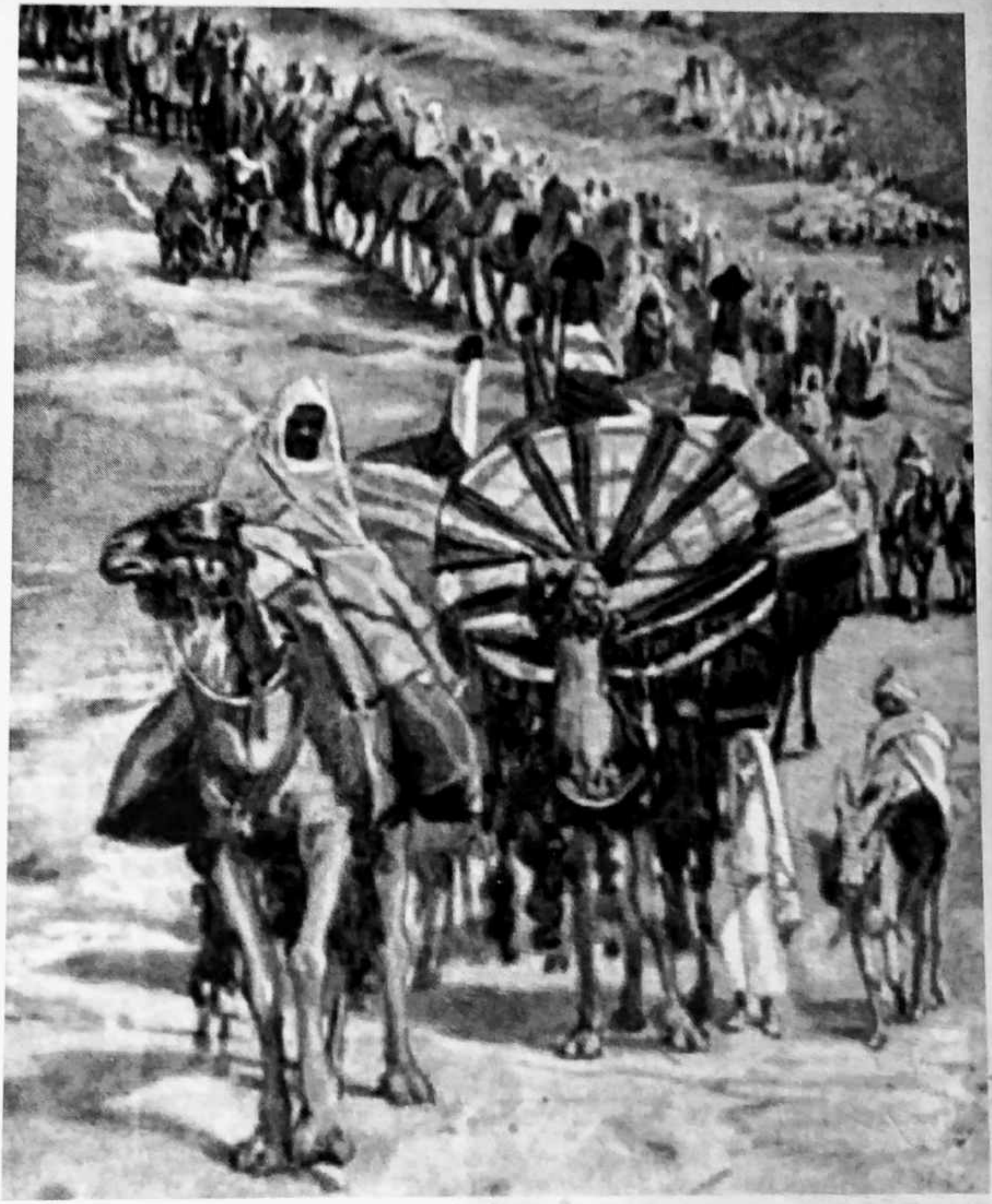
Father of Faith, Father of Nations

John David William. M.A, B.Ed

Once there lived a man named Abram, in Ur of the Chaldeans, a prosperous city with lovely homes, beautiful parks and public buildings. Abram was comfortable and secure in Ur. The people of that land did not know the living God. They worshiped idols of gold, silver and wood.

Death struck early in their house. Abram's brother Haran died. Haran's father Terah, his brother Abram, and his son Lot were deeply affected, hit by the fickleness of life, leaving them deeply frustrated, anxious and empty. Life was so transient, so delicate, so much like the flower of the field which is gone when the wind passeth. They sought refuge in their gods, but they were dead, lifeless. They started searching for answers, for

Ur of Chaldees is identified as the Sumerian city of Ur. The ancient city was located in southern Mesopotamia, near the Euphrates River (see The Tigris-Euphrates Valley), about 150 miles (240 kilometers) southeast of Babylon. Today, Ur finds itself in southern Iraq, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) northwest of the Kuwait border. The Book of Joshua says "Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods.'"(Joshua 24:2)



So Abram left Haran just like the LORD said, and Lot went with him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran.
He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the slaves, and all the other things he had gotten in Haran. Then he and his group moved to the land of Canaan.
Abram traveled through the land as far as the town of Shechem and then to the big tree at Moreh. The Canaanites were living in the land at that time.
The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "I will give this land to your descendants." Abram built an altar to honor the LORD who appeared to him there. Genesis 12:4 - 7

something permanent, for a greater meaning, for a greater purpose in life. At this time God appeared to Abram. God talked to him.

"Leave this country and go to the land which I will show you. I will bless you. You will have many children. Your family will grow and become a big nation. I will bless those who will bless you. I will curse those who will curse you."

Abram was touched in his soul. He was filled with a great joy. God has spoken to him! Not like the idols he worshipped, but a living God, a God who speaks as a man with man. His speech was clear! His words so loving! The words touched his heart. It was as though he had got a new life! Abram had found a God, the living God, a God that speaks, a God that answers prayers, a God that solves problems. He ran to his wife to tell about his experience of the living God. Such was his joy, the excitement on his face, conviction of his voice that she understood that her husband had indeed met the living God. He told her that they have to immediately leave their brothers and sisters, their loved ones, their houses, their work, as God is calling them to go to a different land!

Sarai asked, "Where are we going?" "I don't know but this God who has spoken to me will lead us and guide us. Come!" He said.

When they spoke about their decision to their household, every one of the household was surprised. They were afraid that he was leaving the company of his family, the comfort of his house, and the security of his own land. They knew that beyond their place there were deserts, wild beast, and dangerous tribes who will always harm a stranger.

Abram spoke in detail about how God spoke to him. His heart was confident. His voice had a conviction. They sensed a strange assurance in their hearts! Nothing will happen to their brother! This new God, which Abram and Sarai were speaking with so much conviction and joy, will lead them. Abram's belief on this newfound God, an unseen and unheard God was unbelievable! They could never believe their stone idols with even half such faith. They too believed on this new God.

Abram immediately obeyed God. He with Sarai, his wife, his brother's son, Lot, his father, Terah, started for the land which God was going to show them. They travelled on and on. Heat of the day, chill of the night, poisonous snakes, dangerous creatures, robbers, strangers, powerful kings, famines etc., etc., etc.. Nothing could stop him. For more than six hundred miles they travelled. For almost a year they moved. Then finally they came to a place called Haran. It was an important trading city on the banks of a big river. Father Terah became very sick of constant journeying. He could not take the strain of travelling anymore. His spirit was willing but his body could not. Abram stopped in the city and took care of his old and sick father. He also traded in the city. God blessed him. Abram became a rich man in no time. He now had much gold, silver. Here his father died. Abram almost got settled in that place. God called Abram again to move on. Abram immediately left the prosperity of the city, and started towards uncertainty. Abram immediately obeyed God.

Abram continued his journey. He travelled another four hundred miles. They arrived to a place called Shechem. They rested awhile. God appeared to Abram.

"Unto your children will I give this land"

Abram was filled with joy. He had finally arrived. He had travelled on and on. Now weak, depleted, and tired the words of God came like a welcome showers in a desert. He forgot all travail. He was filled with joy. He was filled with gratefulness. He quickly built a praying place. He worshiped God.

He moved further inside. He faced another difficulty. There was a famine in that land. He heard that there was bread available in the land of Egypt. He went to Egypt. God protected him in that new country. He did not allow anyone, even the king to harm him. He came out of the country and again went and settled in the same place near Bethel. Lot went with Abraham where ever he went.

"Uncle! Where are we going? When shall we settle down." asked Lot. "Son come along! These cities do not have foundation. They can perish any moment. I am on the lookout for a city that has foundation, whose maker and builder is God." Abraham said.

But constant wanderings wearied Lot down. He had a family by now, had much wealth, cattle and tents. He was tired of living in tents. He did not like to walk on and on.

Lot and Abram had many cattle. The place that they lived did not have grass and water enough to support them. Once there was a fight between the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abraham. Lot went and complained to Abraham about it. "Son! Don't worry about these small

things. God will take us a large place where there will be place enough for both of us." Abram said.

The fight between the herdsmen of Lot and Abram became frequent and so became the frequent complaining of Lot to his uncle Abram. One day the arguments between the herdsmen turned into a fight. The natives of the land came to see. Abram understood what Lot wanted. A SEPARATION! Abram wanted to be separated in peace. Abram always had the habit of giving the first choice to others. He called Lot.

"The whole land is before you. If you go to the left, I will go to the right. If you go to the right, I will go to the left." Abram said.

This was what Lot was waiting for. He saw the plains of Jordan, well watered everywhere, just like the Garden of Eden, just like land of Egypt. Lot departed from his uncle. As he was departing Abram and Sarai hugged him, tears flowed from their eyes. Abram had always loved Lot, his brother's son as his own son. He had no son for himself. Abram blessed him and said, "Son, keep your eyes on the living God, HE shall be your reward."

Abram became very sad after Lot and his family had departed. He felt all lonely and grey. As he sat alone, he poured out his heart to God. God felt the sorrow of his friend. By now God had become a close friend of Abram. He spoke to him and encouraged him,

"Look up. Look to the north, south, east and west. I will give all the land to you which you see. I will give you many children. They shall be as the dust of the earth. Walk through the length and breadth of the land and I will give all the land to you.

And Abram returned back home very joyfully. God has given him a purpose in life. He always had to walk up and down the place. It was his lifework. Moreover, God also promised him a son! He had two intense desires - to know the living God, and to have a son. He has come to know the living God and now he was going to have a son. His sorrows evaporated. Yes, Lot has departed, but he has to do what God wanted him to do! He went home and told his wife Sarai God's great purpose. They became very happy. They held a feast for the entire camp. Everyone rejoiced. The God of Abram had become the God of the entire camp. The promises of God was believed by Abram and the entire camp. The next day they lifted their tents and started towards South. They came to a place called Hebron.

A year passed away. Abram waited for the birth of his son. He wondered why the promise of God was not being fulfilled. He had thought that God would give him a son as soon as he had promised. The camp was getting restless too. Sarai became restless too. His servants became very impatient. Everyday their impatience was reaching Abram's ears. During the evening campfire Abram used to tell that God is faithful who has promised. But frustration was slowly creeping into him. He too feared that he was getting older, that Sarai was getting older too. Once while he was

And the Lord had said to Abram, after Lot was parted from him, From this place where you are take a look to the north and to the south, to the east and to the west: For all the land which you see I will give to you and to your seed for ever.

And he took him out into the open air, and said to him, Let your eyes be lifted to heaven, and see if the stars may be numbered; even so will your

praying God spoke to him in a vision,

"Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

Abram said, "O Lord, What will you give me? See, I don't have any children. My only heir is Eliezer of Damascus. Will he be my successor? You have given me no child."

God said,

"He shall not be your heir. Sarai shall give birth to a child. He shall be your heir."

God brought him out and showed him the open skies. God said,

"Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, can you? he said to him, So shall your seed be."

And Abram believed God. He is God, Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth. He will definitely fulfill that he has promised. No need to fear! God is a shield against all fears.

Abram believed God and so God started telling him what will happen to him and his children in the future. God told him that he shall have many children. They shall live in a strange country. There they will be tortured and afflicted. But God shall judge that country for their misdeeds against the children of Abram. When they will be brought out, it shall be with great riches. They shall be brought into a big country. It shall stretch from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

After twenty four years

Twenty four years passed away after Abram left his beloved homeland to obey his new found God. Following his new found God was not easy. He had left all and followed him. He had to walk on and on knowing not where he was going. This rich man accustomed to easy life, fine houses, good friends, had now to carry his tent where he went, live among strangers, stop where God told him to and start when God told him to. This rich man accustomed to dictate his will to others had now to wait for God's dictates. Abram was a changed man now. His eyes were always on Him, waiting to obey what fell from HIS mouth. He obeyed God at all cost. Abram plodded on. He believed in God, the Possessor of heaven and earth, who protected him on the way, among strangers, who had become close to him as a friend. God saw the faithfulness of this man. He saw how he walked before HIM in fear and trembling, never taking for granted HIS mercies, giving ear to HIS voice and kept HIS words, HIS rules, HIS orders, and HIS laws. God promised him that he would give a son from Sarai, but many, many years passed and he had no son. Yet was there not a single word of complaint or murmur. God saw Abram, who without reason for hope, in faith went on hoping. God loved him. He deeply appreciated his faith, obedience, and patience. He wanted to bless him abundantly, wanted to open the windows of heaven to pour out his blessings on him.

One day God spoke to him. Abram fell down and worshipped God. God said,

I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be perfect. I will make an

And lifting up his eyes, he saw three men before him; and seeing them, he went quickly to them from the door of the tent, and went down on his face to the earth.

And he said, I will certainly come back to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife will have a son.

agreement between you and me. Your offspring will be greatly increased. You will be the father of many nations. Your name shall be called Abraham, because you will be a Father of many nations. Kings will be your offspring. I am making an eternal agreement to be a God to you and to your seed after you. To you and to your seed after you, I will give the land in which you are living, all the land of Canaan for an eternal heritage. This is the agreement which you are to keep with me, you and your seed after you, every male among you is to undergo circumcision on the eighth day of his birth. Your wife shall no more be called Sarai, but Sarah, because she shall be a mother of many nations.

And Abraham immediately obeyed. He underwent circumcision at the age of ninety-nine years old.

Abraham had now grown in faith. He had become a friend, a confidant of God. He was certain that God was able to keep his word. He believed that God, who gives life to the dead, and to whom nothing is impossible, can give a child to Abram though he was hundred years old and Sarah ninety.

One day, tired from his journey, he had his food and sat in his tent thinking how God delights in fulfilling his promises in his own good time. He has to just wait on. But he felt that the time of fulfillment of the promise was coming near. As he sat thinking of God's great promise towards him, he saw the arrival of three men towards his tent. He quickly recognized that God Almighty has come to his tent. He had walked with this God for the last so many years. Day in and day out he had heard him counsel, console, and cheer him. And now he was seeing him in person. He had no problems recognizing God. He went forward and fell before God. He invited God to his tent. He set the best before God and they did eat. God told Abraham that the time has come that Sarah shall have a son. The next year at the same time, Sarah shall have a son. Sarah laughed when she heard it, she has become too old to have a child!!!!! God said that WITH HIM NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE.

Then God and his two companions rose up and headed towards Sodom. But before he took leave he told Abraham what he was going to do to Sodom. "How can I hide something to Abraham who is going to become the Father of Nation, who will surely teach his children to serve God, do righteousness and justice?" said God. He told him that he is going to destroy Sodom because of their sins.

Oh! Lot is there, thought Abraham. "Lord, will you destroy the good people too when you are destroying the evil?" "Will you spare the city if there are fifty good people?

For he thought Lot is dwelling in a place where there are at least fifty good people. God said he will have mercy on the city if there are at least fifty good people. Then he had a doubt.

"Lord, I am but dust, have mercy on me as I put my prayer, will you destroy this city if there are five less?" Abraham thought if this merciful God has decided to destroy the city, truly their sins would be grievous. Yet

And looking in the direction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the lowland, he saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of an oven. So it came about that when God sent destruction on the towns of the lowland, he kept his word to Abraham, and sent Lot safely away when he put an end to the towns where he was living.

he pleaded for Lot.

"Lord, please don't be angry, if there are thirty, will you destroy the city?"

"Lord if there are twenty, will you destroy the city?"

"Lord if there are ten, will you destroy the city?"

"I will have mercy, mercy, mercy. Even if there are ten righteous people I will not destroy that city," said God. Content that there would be atleast ten righteous people in Sodom and that Lot would not be caught in the destruction, he came to sleep that night. But anxiety about Lot haunted him. When, God who delights in mercy has decided to destroy a city, truly the people of that city would have been very wicked.

The next day very early in the morning Abraham ran to the very place where he was speaking with God the previous day. From there when he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah he saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of an oven. Abraham felt sad and lost. Lot had chose to live in a place where there were not even ten good men! Not even ten worthy men! How important is the choice of a man! It is the difference between life and death.

Abraham did not know that the faithful and merciful God had kept his word to Abraham, and sent Lot safely away when he destroyed the towns where he was living. Though Lot's life was saved, he lost his wife, children and his generation.

At the said time, God brought the word which He had told, come to pass. Sarah gave birth to a boy. She called his name Isaac.

Abraham loved Isaac very much. He was a child of the old age. It gave him so much joy to see him grow up. He spent much time with him. He was as if his grandson. Lovingly, Abraham taught to him about the Living God. He spoke to him about his experiences with God. While walking and while working, Abraham would find something to direct his conversation about the living God.

As Isaac grew in age, his faith grew. He could see God just as his father saw. Isaac also came to love, trust, fear the God of his father.

One day God appeared to Abraham and said,

"Take your son, your dearly loved only son Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah

And Abraham put the wood for the burned offering on his son's back, and he himself took the fire and the knife in his hand, and the two of them went on together. Then Isaac said to Abraham, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, We have wood and fire here, but where is the lamb for the burned offering? And Abraham said, God himself will give the lamb for the burned offering: so they went on together.

and give him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains."

As soon as the call came from God, he obeyed. The very next day, early in the morning he left for the mountain. It was a three days journey. Abram did not reveal this strange call to anyone, even to his wife Sarah with whom he had shared everything and to Isaac too. The burden of the call expected complete carefulness to obey. He took Isaac, his son, two young men and started for the place.

Abram had walked with God. The Creator of heaven and earth was his friend. This creator was now asking for his son. No sacrifice was too great for this great God. Abram was prepared to leave everything, to do anything just to please this great God, who had been so faithful and loving to him.

Throughout the journey Abraham spoke the importance of Sacrifice. He told him that God expects a living sacrifice, perfect and pleasing to God, true sacrifice is to deny our will and accept God's will, true sacrifice means to choose correctly. Abraham told Isaac that life presents choices and it depends upon us what we choose. Lot chose the green plains of Sodom while he chose to do the will of God though it meant great hardships.

Isaac knew that his father meant every word. He had infact, keenly appreciated his father's choice. He had seen how his father had lived a perfect life, loving God, loving the strangers, doing good to everyone who came his way. He was also deeply grateful to God for choosing and revealing Himself to his father. He also had come to love the God of his father Abraham because He had kept him safe and secure in a strange land, among strangers, even rebuking kings for their sake.

On the third day they reached the mountain. Abraham told his servants that he and the boy will go on and give worship and come back again. Abraham put the wood for the burnt offering on his son's back, and he himself took the fire and the knife in his hand, and the two of them went on together.

Isaac asked, "father, We have wood and fire here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

Abraham said, "God himself will give the lamb for the burnt offering."

They reached the top of the mountain. There Abraham prepared an altar. Abraham spoke slowly but clearly,

"Son, God has asked me to offer you as a burnt offering, and we have to obey Him."

Isaac was shocked. Life has offered a choice to him at so young an age. He was prepared. He made his choice. Better Canaan than Sodom, better Abraham than Lot, better God's will than destruction, better obedience than self. He chose rightly just as his father had done. He went and lied himself down. Abraham slowly tied him with a cord. Isaac put no resistance, closed his eyes. Abraham was happy to see how silently Isaac had given himself up to be a burnt offering. Then he stretched his hand to kill him. But the voice of the angel of the Lord came from heaven, saying,

"Abraham, Abraham, do not harm your son; for now I am

certain that the fear of God is in your heart, because you have not kept back your son, your only son, from me."

And the voice of the angel of the Lord came to Abraham a second time from heaven,

"Abraham, because you have done this and have not kept back from me your dearly loved only son, I will certainly give you my blessing, and your seed will be increased like the stars of heaven and the sand by the seaside; your seed will take the land of those who are against them; And your seed will be a blessing to all the nations of the earth, because you have done what I gave you orders to do.

Today, Abraham is the forefather of many tribes, including the Ishmaelites, Israelites, Midianites and Edomites. Today, important religions of the world consider Abraham as their father. In Jewish traditions, Abraham is referred to as "our Father". In Islamic tradition, Abraham is considered a prophet of Islam, the ancestor of Muhammad, through his firstborn son, Ishmael. In Christian tradition, God's promise to Abraham would be fulfilled, in its entirety, through Jesus Christ. By believing in the name of Jesus, even the Gentiles will also inherit the same promises as the Jews.

Of the entire world population, more than half of the world population look upon Abraham as the father of faith. 33% of Christian, 21% of Muslims, 1% of Jews, 1% of Bahais and many more trace their roots of faith from Abraham. Truly God has blessed the seed of Abraham to be as the stars of heaven. ■

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